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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 63rd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. ZAHID (Morocco)
(Vice-Chairman)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

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In the absence of Mr. Dinu (Romania), Mr. Zahid (Morocco), Vice-Chairman took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 6.50 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 145: FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS OPERATION IN SOMALIA (A/47/916)

1. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), orally presenting the Advisory Committee's report on the financing of the United Nations Operation in Somalia, briefly reviewed the resolutions by which the Security Council had decided to establish the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) and subsequently to extend and expand its mandate.

2. The Secretary-General was requesting the General Assembly to approve an additional appropriation of $327.2 million gross ($326 million net) to cover requirements for the first two months of UNOSOM II (May and June 1993). In paragraph 7 of his report, the Secretary-General indicated that, taking into consideration the existing equipment already in place for UNOSOM, the cost of UNOSOM II was estimated at $397.2 million gross ($396 million net) for the first two months. Start-up costs ($186.3 million) would be for accommodation, emplacement, transport, communication and miscellaneous equipment, while operational costs would amount to $210.9 million gross ($209.7 million net).

3. By resolution 47/41, the General Assembly had apportioned an amount of $109.7 million gross ($107.9 million net) among Member States. Of that amount, $58.9 million remained outstanding as at 28 March 1993. It was estimated that an unencumbered balance of some $70 million would be available at the end of April 1993 from the appropriation provided to UNOSOM.

4. As the Secretary-General had pointed out, more time would be needed to assess the detailed requirements of UNOSOM II. Nevertheless, the Advisory Committee believed that adjustments could be made in the amounts requested for items such as rental and maintenance of premises (including prefabricated housing), acquisition of vehicles and equipment, rental of aircraft, depreciation in value of contingent-owned vehicles and equipment, and other items such as civilian staff costs, support costs and staff assessment. The Committee expected that in the context of the detailed budget estimates to be submitted by the Secretary-General full justification would be providing for the request for prefabricated housing, taking into account existing accommodation for the Unified Task Force (UNITAF). Since the lead time for installation of prefabricated housing was approximately six months, the entire amount indicated for that item would not necessarily be required during the first two months. Similarly, the amount indicated for depreciation of contingent-owned vehicles would not necessarily be required in the initial stages and, given the current vacancy rate, staff costs as indicated in the annex appeared to be on the high side. On the other hand, since all the relevant information was still not available, it was quite possible that unforeseen expenditure would arise.

(Mr. Mselle)

5. In the circumstances, and pending submission of a detailed budget for UNOSOM II and the performance report for UNOSOM, the Advisory Committee recommended that the General Assembly should appropriate and assess the sum of $300 million gross to cover the requirements of UNOSOM II during the initial two-month period, beginning 1 May 1993.

6. Mr. DUHALT (Mexico) said that his delegation would have liked a representative of the Secretary-General to give a brief description of the activities envisaged in the report. Since UNOSOM was one of the most important peace-keeping operations from a financial point of view, it was surprising that the Secretary-General's report was so short. That sort of approach did not facilitate the taking of a rational decision. His delegation hoped that in future, for other peace-keeping operations, sufficiently detailed budgetary documents would be made available to enable the Fifth Committee to take well-informed decisions.

7. Mr. INOMATA (Japan) said that his delegation wished to pay tribute to the countries which had contributed troops to the Unified Task Force (UNITAF), as well as to all those bodies which were providing assistance to the Somalis. The efforts of the international community had been eagerly supported by Japan, which had contributed $100 million to the Trust Fund for Somalia established by the Secretary-General and had in the current year contributed $20 million for humanitarian assistance.

8. His delegation understood that the estimates presented in the report (A/47/916) were the best that the Secretariat could produce in the present circumstances. It also understood the urgent need to appropriate the start-up costs in order to achieve a smooth transition between UNITAF and UNOSOM II. At the same time, it shared the view of the Advisory Committee regarding the possibilities of making adjustments in certain areas, and therefore supported its recommendation that the sum of $300 million gross should be appropriated for the initial two-month period.

9. His delegation expressed its appreciation to the Secretariat for having been able to produce estimates in such a short period of time, but was concerned that the General Assembly had had to appropriate sizeable amounts on the basis of sketchy estimates. He suggested that, in order to avoid a repetition of such extraordinary procedures, a solution should be sought in the context of the debate on agenda item 124 (Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peace-keeping operations). Finally, he requested that the Advisory Committee should continue to present its recommendations in writing, in accordance with the normal practice, in order to ensure transparency and facilitate consideration of the budget.

10. Mr. KLINGENBERG (Denmark), speaking on behalf of the European Community and its member States, said that the Community had on a number of previous occasions expressed its concern over the budgetary procedure currently followed by the Secretariat in connection with peace-keeping operations. As it had recently indicated with regard to the financing of the United Nations Operation in Mozambique, the Community was opposed in principle to the practice of appropriating lump sums or making advance payments for non-specifiable costs. It was of the utmost importance that the Secretary-General should ensure more

(Mr. Klingenberg, Denmark)

effective planning and budget management of peace-keeping operations and his delegation looked forward to having a response to inquiries which had been made earlier as to what measures the Secretary-General had taken or was planning to take to that end.

11. The Community was conscious of the urgent need to establish and deploy UNOSOM in order to prevent any deterioration of the situation in Somalia, as well as of the difficulties in launching an operation on such a scale. However, one of the reasons why the Secretariat was again seeking substantial appropriations in advance of the review in the General Assembly was the fact that Member States did not pay all their contributions in full and on time. Member States, and especially the larger contributors, should therefore give due consideration to that problem, even if that meant adjusting their own budgetary cycles. In that context, it was a matter of very serious concern to the Community to see that the peace-keeping reserve fund was still waiting for cash contributions. In short, Member States which did not fulfil their Charter obligations not only jeopardized peace-keeping operations at a crucial moment of their organization, but also deprived intergovernmental bodies of proper budgetary control over operations at their outset. In that connection, the Community drew attention to General Assembly resolution 47/215 on improving the financial situation of the United Nations.

12. By providing incomplete information, the Secretariat was complicating matters for both the Fifth Committee and the Advisory Committee. It was not in the interests of either UNOSOM or the United Nations that decisions should be taken without sufficient information. The Community would therefore reserve its position until the information which it and other Member States had requested was provided by the Secretariat. Finally, the European Community wished to stress its commitment to the peace process in Somalia.

13. Mr. SENGWE (Zimbabwe) said that now that UNITAF had fulfilled its mission, the international community should ensure the deployment of UNOSOM II in accordance with the mandate which had recently been defined by the Security Council. His delegation knew that there were problems to be solved, as other delegations had noted, and it shared the concerns which had been voiced regarding the lack of budgetary information. However, it was extremely important to ensure a rapid deployment of UNOSOM II in order to benefit from the favourable political climate currently reigning in Somalia, where the parties concerned had recently agreed to finalize a transition mechanism. His delegation therefore supported the recommendation of the Advisory Committee for an appropriation of $300 million to cover the start-up costs of the operation.

14. Mr. MICHALSKI (United States of America) expressed the hope that UNOSOM II would follow up on the efforts already undertaken by a substantial number of countries, including the United States, whose contribution to the United Nations intervention force amounted to approximately $1 billion. His delegation shared some of the concerns expressed by others regarding the overall amount requested by the Secretary-General, and believed, as did Japan, that current budgeting practices and certain rules of financial management must be re-examined in order to meet two requirements: first, Member States should allow the Secretary-General and the Organization to take quick action when the situation so required; and second, the Secretariat should provide Member States with

(Mr. Michalski, United States)

sufficient information to reassure them that the funds would be put to the best use. His delegation hoped that new thinking on those questions would soon produce concrete results. Lastly, with respect to the payment of assessments, he recalled that the Clinton Administration intended to comply fully with the obligations of the United States to the United Nations. During the calendar year 1992, payments by the United States had accounted for more than 40 per cent of the Organization's total collections for all peace-keeping operations.

15. Mr. GATHUNGU (Kenya) said that, taking into account the complexity of the projected operation and the very tight schedule it had been given, the Secretariat had done remarkable work. The problems associated with the presentation of that kind of budget which had been mentioned by several delegations were not new and should be examined separately. His delegation did not underestimate the importance of those problems, but believed that urgent action was needed. It was well aware of the heavy financial burden which the UNOSOM II operation represented for Member States, including Kenya, but that burden was the consequence of a decision taken by the Security Council following a detailed examination of the question. While the requests made by the Secretary-General appeared reasonable, his delegation could accept the recommendations of the Advisory Committee to the extent that the recommended reduction would not undermine the implementation of Security Council resolution 814 B.

16. Mr. FRANCIS (Australia) said he had no objection in principle to the Secretary-General's proposal. His delegation supported the Advisory Committee's recommendation with respect to the amount of financing proposed for the two-month period and hoped to see a complete and detailed budget well before the end of June. Naturally, his delegation was still concerned about the general problem of financing peace-keeping operations.

17. Mr. BAUDOT (Controller) said that, while the budget before the Committee lacked detail, it should not be considered as a simple lump-sum package; a detailed budget would be presented as soon as possible. Moreover, given the expanding scope of UNOSOM, the Secretary-General would have been obliged to request an appropriation even if the financial situation had been normal.

18. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Committee should resume its consideration of the item in informal consultations.

19. It was so decided.

AGENDA ITEM 124: ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY ASPECTS OF THE FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS PEACE-KEEPING OPERATIONS (A/47/898) (continued)

Establishment of a Peace-keeping Reserve Fund (A/47/898)

20. Mr. BAUDOT (Controller) drew attention to paragraph 5 of the Secretary-General's note (A/47/898), which indicated that $9.5 million from the Peace-keeping Reserve Fund had been earmarked to meet initial costs associated with the United Nations Operation in Mozambique (ONUMOZ). The allocation to ONUMOZ was perfectly consistent with the overall purpose of the Fund, and brought to $32.9 million the Fund's total outstanding loans to the United

(Mr. Baudot)

Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM), the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission (UNIKOM), and the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL). None of those operations was in a position to repay the loans.

21. The Reserve Fund was the only remaining recourse for coping with the problem of financing peace-keeping operations, since the sums left over from the accounts of the United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) and the United Nations Iran-Iraq Military Observer Group (UNIIMOG) had already been transferred to it. When the lack of liquidity of several operations (one of which, UNAVEM, owed $11.9 million to the General Fund and was not in a position to repay) was taken into account, it became clear that the Fund could not fulfil its mandate with the resources currently available. The very establishment of the Fund represented a step forward, but there was no hiding the fact that if Member States were not more punctual in making their payments, the development of peace-keeping operations would pose increasingly intractable financial problems.

22. Mr. FRANCIS (Australia) said he was surprised to learn that, of the $59 million paid into the Reserve Fund, $32.9 million had been lent to three ongoing operations that were not in a position to repay the funds already advanced. The Fund had thus been deprived for resources expressly earmarked to pay for the start-up of new peace-keeping operations. However, his delegation had always been convinced that the Fund had been undercapitalized from the beginning and that the Secretariat should not have any internal borrowing powers.

23. In paragraph 4 of his report, the Secretary-General stated that, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 42/216 A, the unencumbered balances of Member States contributions in the General Account would be used first to reimburse the Special Account and the Working Capital Fund before payment could be made to the Reserve Fund for Peace-keeping Operations. His delegation believed that the decision on that issue should be taken by Member States, which might prefer to give higher priority to reconstituting the Reserve Fund. In order to help Member States take an informed decision in that regard, the Secretariat should provide information regarding the amounts owed to the Working Capital Fund and the Special Account from the General Fund, the unencumbered balances of the contributions of Member States in each peace-keeping account, and the unliquidated obligations against each peace-keeping account.

24. More generally, the fact that three quarters of the contributions payable for peace-keeping operations had remained unpaid at the end of February showed that the problem went well beyond the Reserve Fund and required a more energetic response than continuous exhortations to Member States. The idea of an annual budget for peace-keeping operations deserved further study, but other measures could be imagined as well, including the imposition of sanctions on Member States accumulating large arrears; such sanctions might be more severe than those provided for under Article 19 of the Charter but could operate in a similar manner.

25. Mr. INOMATA (Japan) said that General Assembly resolution 47/217 had set out clearly the method for determining the amount to be transferred from UNTAG and UNIIMOG to the Reserve Fund for Peace-keeping Operations. The General Assembly had already established the residual amounts in those accounts that were to be credited to Member States, and he would like to know when that decision would be implemented.

26. With respect to the amount retained in the General Fund pursuant to resolution 42/216 A, his delegation regretted that the transfer to the Peace-keeping Reserve Fund called for under resolution 47/217 (1992) had not been made. Member States had intended the transfer to provide financing for the start-up of peace-keeping operations. Moreover, his delegation believed that the Secretary-General's policy of according priority to the repayment of amounts owed to the Special Account and the Working Capital Fund had the effect of penalizing States that had paid their contributions as against those that had not and was in conflict with article 5.2 (d) of the Financial Regulations. Lastly, his delegation hoped that the Secretariat would provide the Committee with a statement of the cash position and a cash-flow projection for the regular budget and the peace-keeping operations accounts, as well a report on how the Working Capital Fund and the Special Account had been used during the current year.

27. His delegation believed that the amount of the Peace-keeping Reserve Fund should be determined on the basis of objective data. He did not know how the Independent Advisory Group sponsored by the Ford Foundation had arrived at the figure of $400 million. The current amount of $150 million was no doubt sufficient. In order to judge whether it was or not, however, the Secretariat must specify the level of reserves that it believed was required, taking into account the unencumbered balances of all peace-keeping accounts that could be used to finance the start-up of operations in the future.

28. Interest income earned in the Reserve Fund could either be set off against future assessed contributions or credited as income in the annual budget which the Advisory Committee had recommended should be established for the support account for peace-keeping operations (A/47/757).

29. Lastly, no working capital fund or revolving fund could continue to operate unless early and full reimbursement of amounts advanced was ensured. Member States should pay their assessed contributions in a manner consistent with the Charter but in addition the procedures for establishing peace-keeping budgets and the process of issuing assessment letters should be improved and accelerated.

30. Ms. ERIKSSON FOGH (Sweden) welcomed the fact that the Reserve Fund had finally been established, but stressed that its purpose should not be to make up for the shortcomings of Member States. The loans which had already been granted should be considered exceptional, since the Fund was not a mere cash reserve but a tool quite specifically designed to facilitate the launching of new peace-keeping operations. The General Assembly should therefore specify how the resources of the Fund should be allocated, for example by authorizing the Secretary-General, when starting a new operation, to borrow a certain percentage of the budget approved by the Security Council for that operation. Furthermore,

(Ms. Eriksson Fogh, Sweden)

his delegation was of the opinion that interest in credit should remain at the disposal of the Fund.

31. Ms. ROEDSMOEN (Norway) asked what percentage of the contributions was currently paid within three months of their assessment.

32. Mr. MERIFIELD (Canada) wished to have more information on how the Reserve Fund was managed. In particular, he wished to know whether the Secretariat had a realistic assessment of the chances of recovering the amounts loaned and how long repayment would take.

33. Mr. SPAANS (Netherlands) wondered whether the short note of the Secretary-General constituted his reply to paragraph (l) of resolution 47/217. His delegation was making a formal request that the report requested by the General Assembly should be submitted to the Fifth Committee through the Advisory Committee so that the Advisory Committee could give its opinion to the Fifth Committee, in particular with regard to applying paragraph (k) of resolution 47/217.

34. Mr. FONTAINE (Cuba) asked about the procedure adopted with respect to the report of the Group of Independent Experts, which had not been officially submitted to the General Assembly but certain recommendations of which the Secretary-General apparently wished to take up and have approved by the Member States, without consulting the Advisory Committee.

35. Mr. BAUDOT (Controller) said that the Secretariat intended, if possible before the end of April, to draw up an addendum to the latest report of the Secretary-General on the financial situation of the Organization. It would show most, if not all, of the information requested on the liquidity situation (regular budget and peace-keeping operations). There would also be a response to the request of the Netherlands regarding the report on implementing resolution 47/217. With respect to the question asked by Norway, there was a certain improvement, since the percentage of contributions paid within three months of their assessment had, for certain operations, risen from 36 to nearly 60 per cent.

36. The report of the Group of Independent Experts was not a United Nations document but it had been sent to the capitals of the Member States, and the Secretariat was considering how it might be submitted to the Fifth Committee. Before the end of the year, the Secretary-General would express his view on various recommendations on improving the working of the Organization, including those of the Group. The General Assembly would then be able to examine those recommendations with the help of the Advisory Committee before giving its opinion. Regarding the size of the self-refilling fund for peace-keeping operations, he stated that the figure of $400 million put forward by the experts had been arrived at by essentially empirical procedures.

37. The CHAIRMAN said that, if there were no objections, he would take it that the Fifth Committee wished to recommend that the General Assembly should take note of the note by the Secretary-General entitled "Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peace-keeping operations:

(The Chairman)

establishment of a Peace-Keeping Reserve Fund" and to invite him to submit to it, through the Advisory Committee, a report on implementing resolution 47/217, in view of the opinions expressed by the delegations.

38. It was so decided.

AGENDA ITEM 104: PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1992-1993 (continued)

Revised estimates under section 31: Establishment of seven United Nations interim offices (A/47/7/Add.16, A/C.5/47/89)

39. Mr. CLAVIJO (Colombia) felt that, in its report (A/47/7/Add.16), the Advisory Committee had given a very good summary of the situation regarding the question of United Nations interim offices. It had indicated in paragraph 11 that the policy decision with regard to the financing of those offices had yet to be decided upon, and recommended in paragraph 12 that the Secretary-General's report to the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session should be considered by the Committee on Information and the Special Political Committee before the General Assembly took action. However, his delegation found the last sentence of paragraph 12 more difficult to understand. In it the Advisory Committee recommended that arrangements which had not yet been the subject of any decision by the Fifth Committee should be considered provisional and exceptional.

40. It was first of all necessary to question the need to support certain proposed activities, in particular those to be financed by UNDP. It was proposed to list the United Nations share of the costs of the offices under the budget programme section on information activities, even though neither the Committee on Information nor the Special Political Committee had yet considered that question in substance. Given the concerns expressed by certain delegations, he therefore wondered whether it would not be possible to list those expenses under the sections on humanitarian assistance and technical cooperation, taking due account of the mandates in force. Given the urgency of the situation, his delegation could accept such a solution, with the proviso that it should not constitute a precedent.

41. Mr. SPAANS (Netherlands) said that document A/C.5/47/89 did not make clear whether the various agencies had had a substantive exchange of views regarding the unified presence of the United Nations in the field, in particular in the countries concerned by that proposal. It was imperative that that substantive debate should take place before decisions were taken concerning the establishment and siting of United Nations offices. Adequate procedures and budgetary arrangements should be established for the whole system in order to prevent agencies from "going it alone" or engaging in detrimental competition in the field. The extraordinary session of the Governing Council of UNDP held in February 1993 had been somewhat disappointing in that respect. His delegation therefore wished to know whether the Secretariat had taken steps to organize an in-depth exchange of views between United Nations agencies and, if so, how soon and between which agencies.

(Mr. Spaans, Netherlands)

42. His delegation noted that, in the view of the Advisory Committee, the proposal under consideration was not based on any decision by a legislative body. Furthermore, his delegation asked the Secretariat to explain why the sum requested was approximately 30 per cent more than that contained in document A/C.5/47/58.

43. Mr. FONTAINE (Cuba) said that a stop should be put to the trend towards having the Fifth Committee consider documents which had not been submitted by the Controller or the Chairman of the Advisory Committee.

44. His delegation recalled that, in resolution 47/219, the General Assembly had requested the Secretary-General to re-submit a complete report on the establishment and operation of the seven United Nations interim offices, including staffing, project implementation and an integrated budget with full sources of financing, at its resumed forty-seventh session, in accordance, as he emphasized, with the relevant resolutions and decisions of the competent United Nations bodies regarding operational activities and public information activities.

45. He concluded, as had the Advisory Committee, that there was no instruction which authorized submission of the report of the Secretary-General for consideration (A/C.5/47/89). Furthermore, that report contained nothing new in comparison with the preceding report, whose defects it retained. Thus, in paragraph 17, the information collection function assigned to the interim offices regarding official comments on issues of concern to the Secretary-General and the United Nations did not involve the Department of Public Information. The Secretariat should indicate clearly whether or not the project was political, as suggested by the fact that the person chosen to be the leader of the working group entrusted with that question was the Under-Secretary-General for Special Political Affairs. A question of which several aspects involved peace and security, or democracy and human rights (para. 9 of the report) was a matter not so much for the Fifth Committee as for the Security Council.

46. In paragraph 20, it was stipulated that each interim office would have one United Nations representative and one United Nations deputy representative. The Member States had considered that question at great length, but had not yet reached a consensus.

47. His delegation accepted the recommendation of the Advisory Committee (para. 12 of document A/47/7/Add.16), except for the last sentence, in which the Committee recommended that the arrangements currently in place should be considered provisional and exceptional. That would be tantamount to approving a measure contrary to the decisions of the General Assembly with respect to the unified presence of the United Nations. That question should be referred to the Committee on Information and the Special Political Committee, as well as the Second Committee, which dealt with operational development activities.

48. There had apparently been an attempt to use an emergency situation to launch a trial balloon which might make it possible subsequently to extend the experiment to developing countries. His delegation wished to stress that it

(Mr. Fontaine, Cuba)

would resist any attempt of that sort and that it could not accept the Secretary-General's proposal so long as the competent political bodies had not yet voiced their opinion.

49. Mr. MICHALSKI (United States of America) said that he well understood the objections prompted by the lack of instructions from a legislative authority, but doubted whether the information activities referred to in paragraph 17 of the Secretary-General's report were different from those of other United Nations information centres. With respect to the expected cost for the seven local-level field posts (para. 30), he wondered whether the amount shown included other items apart from staff salaries and expenses. If not, the amount seemed high with respect to salary levels in the countries in question.

50. Ms. ERIKSSON FOGH (Sweden), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, noted with satisfaction that, in accordance with resolutions of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly, there was an integrated approach to the support given by United Nations agencies to the newly independent States. Since resources were limited, it was important for those agencies to act jointly, given their comparative advantages and in collaboration with Governments, donors, financial institutions, regional institutions, NGOs, etc.

51. The Nordic countries supported the recommendations put forward by the Advisory Committee in paragraphs 11 and 12 of its report. A more detailed report would be needed in order to apportion the administrative expenses of the interim offices among the agencies in question. In that connection, the Nordic countries stressed that indicative planning figures (IPFs) should not be used to finance such expenses.

52. Mr. RAE (India) agreed with the Advisory Committee that the proposals put forward by the Secretary-General to secure partial financing of the interim offices raised a fundamental question, that of deployment of United Nations agencies in the field, on which there was no consensus yet. There were thus no instructions thereon. He agreed with the representative of Cuba that the Second Committee should also consider the question, taking into account General Assembly resolution 47/199. Finally, he was concerned that IPFs were to be used.

53. Mr. GOUMENNY (Ukraine) said that the establishment of interim offices demonstrated the Secretary-General's concern to make rational use of the limited resources in providing the newly independent States with the assistance they so badly needed. He stressed that information activities promoted the implementation of technical assistance programmes. The functions of the interim offices were clearly defined by the agreements concluded by the United Nations agencies and the Governments of the countries in question, as was shown by an extract of the agreement concerning Kiev, which he proceeded to read out. His delegation thus wanted the Committee to approve the Secretary-General's proposals but, bearing in mind the concerns expressed by certain delegations, was prepared, in a spirit of compromise, to accept the recommendations of the Advisory Committee. His delegation was also in favour of having the

(Mr. Goumenny, Ukraine)

Secretary-General's report to the forty-eighth session submitted not only to the Committee on Information and the Special Political Committee, but also to the Second Committee.

54. Mr. ABELIAN (Armenia) recalled that the Governments of the newly independent States had approved the opening of the interim offices. Given the exceptional character of the process on which those countries were embarked, the United Nations agencies had opted for an integrated approach, which was set out in report DP/1993/5.

55. In paragraph 27 of his report, the Secretary-General had mentioned the extremely difficult situation in Armenia, which was under a veritable blockade. The Secretariat estimated the non-renewable expenses that would be incurred by the establishment of an interim office in Armenia in 1993 at $274,200. His delegation supported the Secretary-General's proposal and the recommendations of the Advisory Committee. He concurred with the Advisory Committee that the question should be referred to the Committee on Information and the Special Political Committee at the forty-eighth session, and gave his full support to the remarks of the representative of Ukraine.

56. Mr. STITT (United Kingdom) recalled that it was in order to respond to urgent needs that the United Nations agencies had, in mid-1992, acting through the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), decided to establish in the newly independent States units capable of supporting the technical cooperation activities of the system. He regretted that the General Assembly had not given clear authorization for those initiatives at its forty-seventh session. The Fifth Committee should none the less adopt the revised estimates that had been referred to it, since the General Assembly would very likely wish to ensure a permanent presence of the United Nations agencies by making available the necessary funds to the regular budget, if the Secretary-General deemed that indispensable. As for the question of a unified presence of the United Nations, such a decision could not be detrimental to the interests of any delegation.

57. Mr. YEGOROV (Belarus) said that the agreements concluded between the United Nations agencies and the Governments in question were identical to those which had previously been concluded with other countries. As a number of delegations had already remarked, he recognized that the question was complex and a matter for the Second Committee, among other bodies. Given the exceptional circumstances, it would be necessary to accept the compromise proposed by the Advisory Committee until such time as the General Assembly was able to give its opinion.

58. Mr. NDOBOLI (Uganda) said that his delegation supported in principle all the efforts exerted to assist the countries in transition, but regretted that the Committee on Information and the Special Political Committee had not been consulted. The decision proposed was tantamount to trying to anticipate the position that would be finally adopted on the pattern of United Nations presence at the national level. His delegation supported the recommendations of the Advisory Committee, but reserved its position on the last two sentences of paragraph 12 of the Committee's report.

59. Mr. BAUDOT (Controller) was pleased that none of the delegations was questioning the usefulness of the interim offices, which had been explicitly recognized by the Governments of the countries in question. Their description as "interim" offices well reflected the particular circumstances under which those offices had been established; they had never been thought of as information centres. A full report would be submitted by the Secretary-General at the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly and nothing would be decided without the agreement of the General Assembly.

60. At the current stage it was necessary to decide on the details of financing for 1993. The agreement concluded with UNDP for the apportionment of expenses would probably not be amended. The Secretary-General was proposing to use the Reserve Fund for the biennium 1992-1993, which would save having to charge the amount in question to chapter 31. Colombia had rightly raised the question of which sections of the budget the resources required should come under. The Secretariat would consider the various options when working out the draft programme budget for the biennium 1994-1995. If the Fifth Committee was opposed to using the Reserve Fund, deployments of resources would be necessary.

61. Mr. FONTAINE (Cuba) said that from a purely technical point of view it would be wrong to use the Reserve Fund since the Fund could be used only to finance new activities deriving from the decisions of legislative authorities, which was not the case. The argument that the initiatives taken were the result of a decision of ACC was not valid either inasmuch as ACC was not a legislative authority. He stressed that his position implied no reservation with respect to the countries in question. He merely felt that the Secretary-General's proposal was not in their interest.

62. If the activities of the interim offices remained within the framework of technical and development assistance, it might be possible to find a solution. He nevertheless wondered why the question had been referred to the Fifth Committee if the financing could be found by transferring resources or through arrangements of which the Secretary-General had availed himself thus far in order to secure the necessary resources. In any case, his delegation was ready to take part in the search for a solution.

The meeting rose at 9.50 p.m.